DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 295 931 SP 030 322

AUTHOR Garibaldi, Antoine M.
TITLE Quality and Diversity in Schools: The Case for an Expanded Pool of Minority Teachers.
PUB DATE Jul 87
NOTE 25p.; Paper commissioned for the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education's Wingspread Policy Forum (Racine, WI, August 5-7, 1987).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Black Teachers; *Career Choice; *College Attendance; *Enrollment Trends; Higher Education; *Minority Group Teachers; Student Attitudes; Student Costs; Student Financial Aid; *Student Recruitment; *Teaching (Occupation)

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ED295931

QUALITY AND DIVERSITY IN SCHOOLS:

THE CASE FOR AN EXPANDED POOL OF MINORITY TEACHERS

ANTOINE M. GARIBALDI, PH.D.

XAVIER UNIVERSITY OF LOUISIANA

JULY 1987

A PAPER COMMISSIONED FOR THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGES FOR TEACHER EDUCATION'S WINGSPREAD POLICY FORUM, AUGUST 5 - 7, 1987, RACINE, WISCONSIN.

SP 030 322

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As the number of teacher education majors has decreased nationally over the last ten years, the declining number of non-white teacher education students has been even more acute. Today barely 10 percent of the teaching force is non-white and that representation continues to decline annually.

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It is time for all Americans to shift from the philosophical debates of the educational reform movement to proactive discussions of who will teach the children of the next generation and what must be done to attract more highly qualified young people to become catalysts of change as teachers. Since the publication of the National Commission on Excellence in Education's report in 1983, a panoply of reforms and educational recommendations have been promulgated by state legislatures, local school districts and professional organizations both within and outside of education. However, none of these plans to reverse the proverbial "tide of mediocrity" in our educational systems can be implemented if schools do not have the necessary staff to teach the curricula.

A massive shortage of teachers between now and 1995 is imminent. There is little doubt that this will occur in this country since the median age of today's teaching force is 41, which makes more than half of them eligible for retirement in three years, and because fewer youth are choosing to major in education. The only debate is whether we will need one million or one and a half million more new teachers by 1995. But equally important is the need for a cadre of highly able non-white teachers, since the racial composition of today's

teaching force almost inversely reflects the ethnic background of students in public schools.

This background paper has been written to specifically address the current status of non-white teachers and teacher education candidates, to identify some of the chief reasons why this group of students is no longer pursuing teaching as a career field, and to offer recommendations to expand the pool of non-white teachers in the next decade. While some attention is devoted to shifts in career interests by these students, the major hypotheses proposed here focus on the smaller numbers of non-white students enrolling in and graduating from college as a percentage of their high school graduation rates and their proportional representation within postsecondary institutions, respectively. Though the terms "non-white" and "minority" are used interchangeably throughout the discussion, the focal group is black teachers for two reasons. First, black teachers comprise three-fourths of the minority teaching force and, secondly, the best and most comprehensive data available are on this group.

TEACHER DEMOGRAPHICS

Today close to 70 percent of the more than two million teachers are female, close to 90 percent are white and their median age is 41. In 1979, Blacks represented 8.6 percent of the teaching force, Hispanics 1.8 percent, and Asian-Americans and Native Americans combined represented less than one percent (National Center for Education Statistics, 1982; Dilworth, 1984). But a recent survey by the National

Education Association for the 1985-86 school year indicates that Blacks now represent 6.9 percent of the teaching force, Hispanics 1.9 percent, Asian-Americans and Pacific Islanders 0.9 percent and Native Americans 0.6 percent (NEA, 1987). These appear to be realistic estimates given what we know about education graduation rates over the last few years.

In 1980, the largest numbers and percentages of minority teachers were located in southern states: Mississippi, 38.6 percent; Louisiana, 35.3 percent; Georgia, 27.6 percent; Alabama, 27.2 percent; and South Carolina, 26.1 percent. While these proportions are consistent with the minority populations in those states, further state-by-state analyses revealed that there were some non-southern states whose proportion of minority teachers did not compare favorably with their percentages of minority population and school enrollment. These states were: New York, 7.8 percent; Colorado, 6.8 percent; Iowa, 1.1 percent; Minnesota, 0.8 percent; and South Dakota, 0.8 percent (Feistritzer, 1983).

SCHOOL ENROLLMENT TRENDS

One of the reasons why the shortage of minority teachers has taken center stage is the fact that the composition of the nation's schools has already become or will be predominantly non-white in the next decade. While that is sound justification for pursuing this issue, most educators firmly assert that because of this country's pluralistic society all students should be exposed to teachers who come from backgrounds different from their own. Thus, both

increasing size and changing characteristics of the current cohort of school-aged children have heightened the prominence of this matter.

Between 1980 and 1984, for example, the number of pre-schoolers rose to an estimated 17.8 million; during this same period, first grade enrollments rose 185,000 to 3,079,000, after experiencing a 33-year low of 2,894,000. But as Feistritzer (1985) notes, this new baby boom is also disproportionately non-white. Between 1970 and 1982, the number of white children under the age of five decreased by 2.7 percent (from 14,464,00 to 14,075,000); but black children in this age group increased by 11.6 percent (2,434,000 to 2,717,000). In 1980, 27 percent of all public elementary and secondary school students were from non-white backgrounds and the fastest growing group was hispanics.

The majority of the public school increases have come in states located in the South and the West where large numbers of blacks and hispanics live. This trend is expected to remain constant into the next decade. Thus, because public school enrollments will be larger, one-third minority by 1995 (Feistritzer, 1985) and because more than 53 major metropolitan school districts will be majority non-white by the turn of the century (Goertz and Pitcher, 1985), the shortage of qualified and ethnically diverse teachers will be exacerbated.

DECLINE OF TEACHER EDUCATION STUDENTS

The shortage of minority teachers is not an isolated event in higher education but rather reflective of all college students' declining interest to choose education as a career field. In 1970 almost twenty percent of all first-time, full-time freshmen indicated a preference for education as a "probable career occupation." In 1982, less than five (4.7) percent of similar students indicated a preference for education. While recent data have indicated an increasing proportion of students who are interested in majoring in education -- 6.2 percent in 1985 and 7.3 percent in 1986 -- the proportion of prospective teachers is far short of levels twenty years ago and it is unlikely that the supply will meet the need in the next decade (Astin, 1987).

The number of teacher education graduates has dropped significantly in absolute numbers. In 1972-73, there were 313,000 teacher education graduates; less than ten years later in 1980-81, only 141,000 teacher education students graduated, a decline of 45 percent. The greatest decline occured between 1975 and 1977 when the number of teacher education graduates dropped from 243,000 to slightly more than 190,000 (**Journal of Teacher Education**, 1983). This decline continues today and it is even more acute for minority students.

BLACK STUDENTS

Until 1976, which marked the peak year for college enrollment by black students, education was the most popular

career choice of black students. In 1976, blacks received 14,095 undergraduate degrees in education, or almost one-fifth of the total awarded to the group. In 1981, however, blacks received five thousand less education degrees (9471) than in 1976, or almost one-seventh of their total undergraduate awards (Hill, 1983). The 1976 share of degrees amounted to 9.2 percent of all education baccalaureates awarded that year across the nation and in 1982 the proportion was 8.8 percent of the total. Clearly, percentages can be misleading since the four tenths of a percent difference between 1976 and 1981 does not show the magnitude of the decline of black education graduates.

On closer inspection of the graduation production of black education majors, two points are obvious. First, two-thirds (9325) of all education degrees awarded to blacks in 1976 and 69 percent (6518) in 1981 were awarded by institutions located in the South. Secondly, almost three-fourths (74%) in 1976 and 63 percent in 1981 were awarded by historically black institutions (Trent, 1984). These two items are obviously interrelated since 90 percent of all historically black colleges and universities are located in the southeastern and southwestern United States (Garibaldi, 1984). Though there are some "predominantly black" colleges in Trent's data, the bulk of the degrees are awarded by the historically black institutions. But even more interesting is the fact that the black colleges accounted for **more than half (55%) of all** black baccalaureate degrees in education in 1976

and 48 percent in 1981!

These institutions continue to play a pivotal role in the production of black teacher education students but the numbers of students they enroll in these programs are much smaller than ten years ago. As this author discovered in a recent analysis of the decline of teachers in Louisiana, the five historically black colleges in the state awarded 745 education degrees in 1977 but only 242 in 1983. Nevertheless, these degrees, granted by only five of the 21 institutions in the state which have teacher education programs, constituted 79 percent of all black education graduates in the state in 1977 and 67 percent in 1983 (Garibaldi, 1986).

Even though black colleges may hold the key to the expansion of the pool of black teachers in the next decade, both they and predominantly white colleges must increase their share of non-white education graduates. In the Louisiana study, education degrees accounted for only 13 percent of all baccalaureates awarded in 1983 by two of the public black colleges (compared to 37 percent in 1977) and 5 percent of the total undergraduate degrees by the two private black colleges (compared to 20 percent in 1977)! Thus, other colleges and universities must help to increase these numbers by recruiting and offering scholarships to more non-white education majors. The effort must be a priority of all institutions.

GRADUATION VS. CERTIFICATION

One of the major problems which researchers concerned

with this topic constantly encounter is the inadequacy of data bases to reasonably estimate what percentage of education graduates are certified and how many of that number actually go into teaching. Since few, if any, state departments of education collect racial data on those individuals whom they certify, the best source of placement data by race must come from schools, colleges and departments of education. State departments can usually obtain aggregate racial data on students who take minimum competency exams, such as the National Teachers Examination, but rarely do they attempt to correlate that data with certification applications because of the legal requirement to protect individual privacy.

Thus, the prediction of what percentage of minority students actually enter the classroom is an important but elusive issue . We can reasonably speculate, though, that the number of minority students who enter the teaching force is much smaller than the numbers who actually graduate from teacher education programs. The bases of that hunch rest not only on the poor performance by black and other non-white students on the NTE and similar state competency exams in the early 1980's, but is also evidenced by the smaller number of non-whites who are taking the tests. In Louisiana, for example, only six percent (or 116) of the state's teaching certificates in 1982-83 were awarded to graduates of the historically black colleges despite the fact that there were 242 graduates from these institutions during the reporting

year. Similarly, while 536 blacks took the NTE in 1978-79, only 170 took the test in 1981-82.

Because there are no conclusive data to estimate how few minority teachers are entering the classroom, these kinds of interpolations, where historicaly black colleges are located, are the best means of demonstrating that the decline is more grave than what we believe. More precisely, graduation figures do not translate into certification applications and receipt of a teacher's certificate is not conclusive evidence that the individual will teach.

REASONS FOR THE DECLINE

The causes for the decline of teachers over the last ten years are more complex than conventional wisdom suggests. But the least discussed and most critical explanation for the decline of non-white teacher education candidates hinges directly upon the smaller numbers of minority students enrolling in and graduating from four-year colleges and universities.

Most agree that the overall decline of teachers has been precipitated by several factors. These include: an oversupply of teachers during the late 1970's in many states; more career opportunities for minority students, precipitated largely by the enforcement of affirmative action policies; a greater preference by students for other fields with higher salaries and more prestige; the lack of public and parental support given to students who are interested in teaching; and, as noted above, the imposition of minimum competency

examinations as a requirement for certification in many states.

While those forces have had some impact on the teaching shortage generally, the more fundamental explanation for fewer Black, Hispanic, Asian-American and Native-American teachers is that their college enrollment and graduation rates have not kept pace with their percentages in their respective 18- to 24-year old cohorts. The unfortunate trend of declining black student enrollment in college over the last ten years is illustrative.

The numbers and proportion of black students enrolled in college today should be much higher given their current population demographics. In 1980, the census reported that half of the black population was under the age of 25 and half of that number was under the age of 20. Between 1977 and 1984, the number of black students who graduated from high school increased by 26 percent. Though that increase does not reflect the fact that only 2.4 of 3.5 million 18- to 24-year-old blacks had received their high school diplomas in 1980, the proportion of blacks who enrolled in college decreased by 11 percent between 1975 and 1982 (American Council on Education, 1987).

In 1976, blacks accounted for 9.6 percent of the total enrollment in college compared to 8.8 percent in 1984. This decline of almost two percentage points not only represents a decrease of 20 percent less black students in college than there were in the mid 1970's but also reflects a static

enrollment of just over one million students in college at a time when the proportion should have increased by more than 20 percent. Thus, rather than capitalizing on the increasing size of the age cohort and the larger numbers graduating from high school, college participation rates for blacks have regressed significantly. But even more serious is the fact that 43 percent of these students are in two-year colleges (American Council on Education, 1987), where only about 15 percent transfer to four-year institutions (College Board, 1985).

Available data on Hispanic and Native-American students also show stationary trends with respect to high school graduation and college enrollment rates between 1976 and 1984. Only about 55 percent of both groups' 18- to 24-year old cohort graduated from high school between those years. Moreover, approximately 17 percent of Native American, and about 20 percent of Hispanic, high school graduates enroll in college (Astin, 1982).

Hispanics' proportion of high school graduates who went to college also declined between 1976 and 1984 from 22.5 to 19.8 percent at a time when their enrollment should have increased in absolute numbers because of an additional 600,000 in their 18- to 24-year old cohort (see Allen, 1987). Furthermore, over half of all Hispanic and Native American students are enrolled in community colleges, compared to 36 percent of white students (American Council on Education, 1987).

Reviews of the Department of Education's Fall enrollment surveys between 1976 and 1984 indicate that the number of Asian-American college students grew the fastest as a group in absolute numbers (e.g., from 152,533 in 1976 to 284,897 in 1984) but at a considerably lower rate. Asian-American enrollments, as a percentage of total college enrollments, only increased by almost one percentage point (from 2.3 to 3.2 percent) between 1980 and 1984.

GRADUATION RATES

Even more important than enrolling larger numbers of non-white students is the need to graduate them at rates equal to their proportion in college. And, since the bulk of Hispanic, Black and Native American students are enrolled in community colleges, it is even more imperative that these students transfer to and graduate from four-year institutions in larger numbers.

An analysis of 1980 undergraduate enrollment and graduation data by the American Council on Education's Office of Minority Concerns (1987) indicate that only white students received proportionally more bachelor's degrees than their enrollment percentages within higher education institutions. Whites represented 80.6 percent of undergraduate enrollments and received 86.4 percent of the degrees; Asian-Americans constituted 2.3 percent and received 2.0 percent of the degrees; and Hispanics and Native-Americans accounted for 4.2 and 0.7 percent of total enrollment but received 2.3 only and 0.4 percent of the degrees, respectively. Blacks, who

represented the second largest group of students in college at 10.1 percent, received only 6.5 percent of all bachelor's degrees that year.

Though these disparities in enrollment and graduation rates are due largely to high attrition rates at colleges and universities, and caused primarily by insufficient financial aid, all postsecondary institutions must individually address the major problems non-white students are experiencing. Only then will graduation rates equal or exceed the proportional enrollment rates of non-white students. Furthermore, special efforts should be devised to help the large numbers of non-white students in community colleges to transfer to and graduate from four-year institutions.

SHIFTS IN CAREER PREFERENCES

As implied several times before in this paper, fewer black and other non-white students have chosen to major in education. Between 1976 and 1981, blacks increased their proportional representation among bachelor's degree recipients in 11 of 24 disciplines. The increases occurred, in ranking order, in public affairs and services, psychology, communications, interdisciplinary studies, the health professions, biological sciences, fine and applied arts, physical sciences, engineering, architecture and environmental design and agriculture and natural resources (Hill, 1983).

Declines in both number and percent of degrees awarded to blacks occurred in the fields of education, social

sciences, library science, computer and information sciences and foreign languages. Not surprisingly, the trend for majors of black students parallels other groups of students in college, with business and public affairs having the most graduates.

The most obvious explanation for this shift in college preferences is that students are pursuing careers where they believe they can make more money as well as professions which are given a higher status by society. While it is also true that affirmative action opened college and professional doors in the early 1970's such that black and other non-white students shifted their majors from "traditional" to non-traditional disciplines, many would argue that today those doors have merely revolved rather than been open wider. But negative publicity of schools and education, coupled with the fact that most teachers and parents have not encouraged many youth to pursue this field, have definitely played major roles in turning more students away from education programs.

The problem for minority parents particularly is magnified by their requirement to pay more of their son or daughter's college tuition with loans rather than grants toward a career that has not kept up with inflation over the last ten years. Because of economic conditions primarily, few parents, and especially those who are teachers and non-white, are willing to endorse their child's choice to teach.

But what do students think? Based on a survey of 300 black and white education and non-education majors in this

author's Louisiana study, all majors felt that higher salaries were important. But the non-education majors believed that career advancement opportunities and job security were even more critical. Both also agreed that teachers deserved more respect and non-education majors strongly indicated an interest in majoring in education if some form of financial aid were provided to pay for their education. Only one item showed significant racial differences. Black education majors expressed greater anxiety about the National Teachers Examination while white students were more concerned about working conditions in schools (Garibaldi, 1986).

CERTIFICATION EXAMS

State and national certification exams such as the National Teachers Examination, which assess basic competencies in the liberal arts, professional knowledge in education and specialty curricula, have also contributed to the discouragement of many non-white students from majoring in education. Even though several public and private historically black colleges have radically improved their students' passing performance on the NTE over the last three years, students and the public seem to only remember the low passing rates of a few years ago.

In a study of students who took the NTE in seven states two Educational Testing Service researchers found that only 13 percent of black students and two percent of hispanic students had achieved the qualifying scores, compared to 79

percent of the white students who took the test (Goertz and Pitcher, 1985). Similar results were shown in a Louisiana Board of Regents study which indicated that 20 percent of the blacks and 80 percent of the whites who took the test between 1978 and 1982 passed.

Analyses of other state competency exams revealed similar trends. In California, 71 percent of black and hispanic students failed the college level basic skills test; only 35 percent of black education majors in Florida passed their teacher certification exam; in Oklahoma 48 percent of blacks and 58 percent of hispanics passed that state's certification exam compared to an overall pass rate of 80 percent; and in Texas, 62 percent of whites, 10 percent of blacks and 19 percent of hispanics passed all three sections of a competency test required for admission to colleges of education (Goertz and Pitcher, 1985).

As stated earlier, significant improvements have been made in the percentage of students who pass these examinations but at the expense of a much smaller pool of graduates. Thus, even though certification exams are here to stay, it is clear from the data that certification exams have no doubt decreased the pool of non-white teachers. Perhaps as more positive media attention is given to non-white students' successful passing rates on these tests, the numbers of minority teacher education candidates will increase.

QUALITY OF STUDENTS

Given the fact that population demographics show more

blacks and Hispanics in the 18- to 24-year old cohort, many colleges and universities are competing for academically talented non-white students and providing substantial scholarship packages as their primary lure. Analyses of 1986 Scholastic Aptitude Tests and American College Tests demonstrate that the lowest scoring group of students on these tests "express an interest" in education. For example, the average SAT score in eight career fields for Whites was 932 compared to Mexican-Americans' 796, Puerto Ricans' 756 and Blacks' 715. For the 1986 ACT, black students' average score was 13 compared to whites' 19.7 and an average national mean of 18.8. However, data from surveys by the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education indicate that the SAT and ACT scores of **enrolled** education majors in member institutions are not as low as those reported above.

While many non-white students score quite high on these tests, the reality is that they are recruited heavily for fields other than education. Nevertheless, many deans and chairpersons affirm that the academic quality of their students is better today than a few years ago and they attribute this shift to higher state and institutional admission standards for education students. But institutional officials must also commit themselves to increased recruiting efforts targeted at education majors.

CONCLUSION

This paper has identified a number of areas which, if left unchecked, will adversely affect the maintenance and

expansion of the minority teaching pool in the next decade and into the 21st century. None of the potential solutions are easy but most must coincidentally be implemented in the the very educational institutions where society hopes they will return as teachers. Since 35 percent of the total population in the year 2020 will be non-white and since so much of this group today is young, it is imperative that we attempt to do some things now while the opportunity presents itself. Below are a few recommendations which flow directly from the previous discussion.

1. More positive media attention must be given to teachers and the role and status of teaching within our society.
2. High school graduation rates for these students must be improved while simultaneously decreasing their dropout rates.
3. The proportion of non-white high school graduates who enroll in college must be increased by at least twenty percent.
4. The graduation rates of non-white students must surpass their percentages within colleges and universities. This will require more academic and support services, which are not necessarily remedial, to help these students adjust to college life and avert unnecessary withdrawals.
5. Community and two-year colleges must increase the transfer rates of non-white students to at least one-half of their proportional representation on campus. Pre-arranged collaborative efforts between proximally located two-year

and four-year schools have the best possibilities for immediate success.

6. Financial aid policies at the federal and state levels are in need of rampant changes, so that families of these students, many of whom are not financially self-sufficient, have more available grants rather than loans to support their college education.
7. For students interested in teaching, forgivable loan programs should be expanded and more appropriations authorized. However, the eligibility criteria should not be so restrictive (e.g., standardized test scores) that the critical mass of non-white students are automatically excluded from this opportunity.
8. Historically black colleges and universities, given their continued success in the graduate production of black students, should receive more institutional support through the re-authorized provisions of the Higher Education Act of 1965.
9. Predominantly white institutions should make concerted efforts to recruit more non-white students into teacher education programs and offer more scholarships for that specific purpose.
10. Data collection by federal, state and local education agencies should be improved so that the research community will have more precise demographic information on the teaching force, as well as better estimates of the proportion of education graduates who enter the teaching

force. These statistics will be critical when the teaching shortage becomes more severe in the early 1990's.

If most of these recommendations are seriously attempted and implemented, great strides will have been made towards the assurance of a highly qualified and diverse teaching force.

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